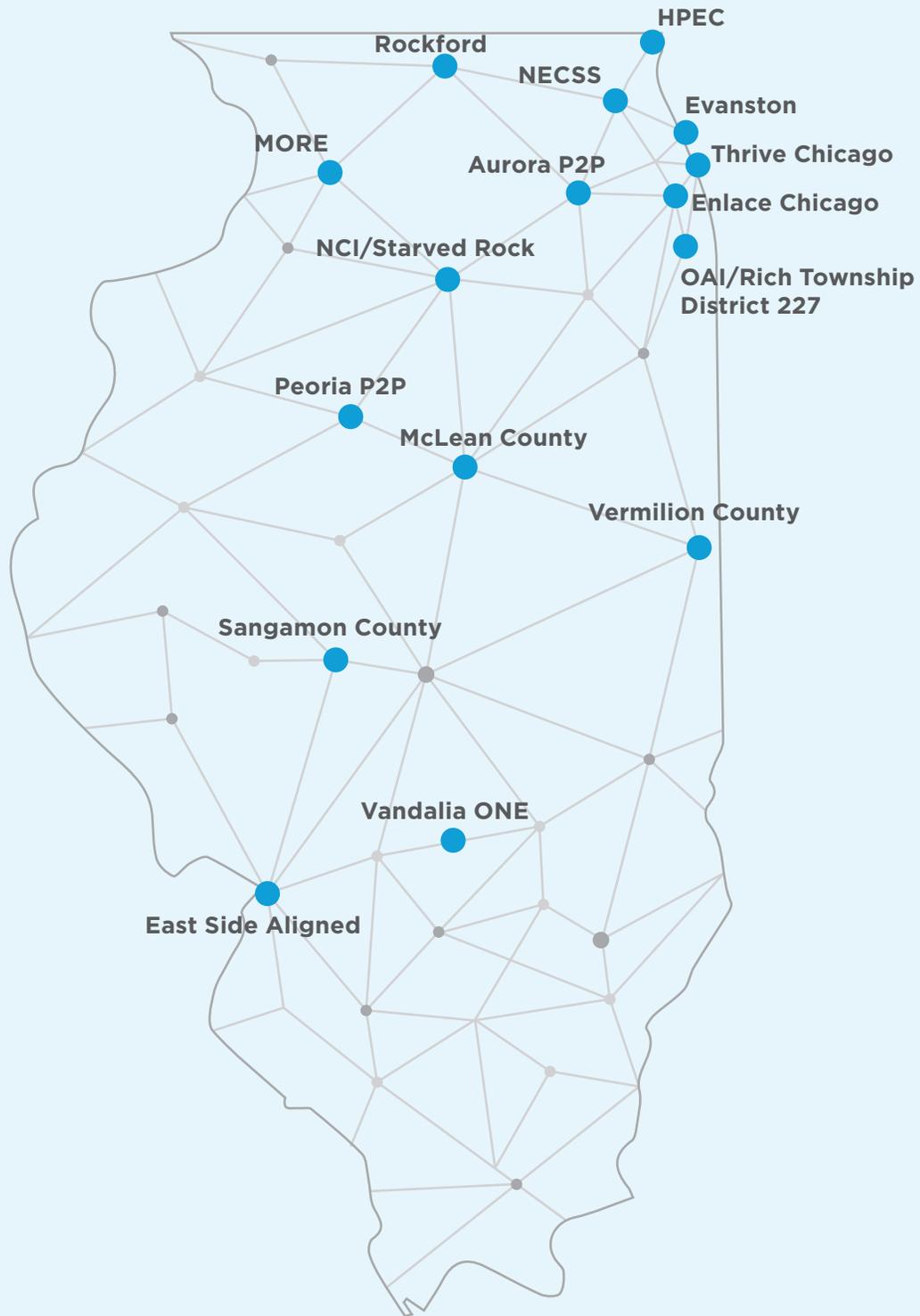




ILLINOIS 60 BY 25 NETWORK IMPACT REPORT

July 2020

www.60by25.org





Prologue

The preliminary findings in this report were presented at the annual Illinois 60 by 25 Conference in February 2020. Since then, the world has changed significantly. We are facing the confluence of the COVID-19 pandemic, a recession, and the most sustained protests against racial injustice that we have witnessed in decades — all of which have laid bare the structural inequities in all sectors of society. The pandemic has resulted in the loss of life, changed the way students learn, transformed how we work, and created tremendous uncertainty across the globe.

In response to these shifts, the Illinois 60 by 25 Network Organizers reached out to Illinois 60 by 25 Network communities in March 2020 to understand the kinds of supports they need to navigate these unprecedented times. Organizers heard that communities wanted to connect with one another and understand how others were addressing challenges including:



Strategies for meeting basic needs of students and families



Opportunities and methods for implementing virtual instruction and virtual work-based learning using an equity lens



Strategies for engaging students, families, and staff while using virtual data collection



Approaches to implementing summer jobs for youth

Over the last few months, Network Organizers have held virtual convenings for communities to share information and resources. Because the policy landscape continues to evolve, Network Organizers have also provided local and federal policy updates related to COVID-19. A range of stakeholders with varying levels of prior Network engagement has attended these convenings.

As Network Organizers continue to support communities in meeting rising needs and advancing equity for students, they will continue to create opportunities for communities to connect, and to curate the resources on the Network's website (60by25.org). Organizers will take active steps to deepen their understanding on equitable policies and practices, and lift them up to ensure that young people have the supports they need to succeed in school and in life, as they navigate these challenging times.



Introduction

This report captures the impact of the Illinois 60 by 25 Network over its seven years of existence. Communities that are in the Network are driving State policy implementation, deepening and validating collaboration by using the organizing principles of collective impact, increasing cross-sector collaboration, and enhancing leadership and governance structures within their communities. Network Organizers believe that the systems and practices that communities have put in place can be helpful as they manage the COVID-19 crisis.

GOALS AND METHODOLOGY

The goal of this report is to highlight findings on strategies used and lessons learned by the Illinois 60 by 25 Network while using a collective impact approach to help communities increase meaningful and equitable postsecondary attainment. The report is intended to both shine a light on the hard work that communities are doing to move the needle on the 60 by 25 goal and to inspire other communities to implement similar strategies.

Information for the report was derived from interviews with representatives from backbone organizations of Illinois 60 by 25 Network Leadership Communities, representatives from the 60 by 25 Network Guiding Team, and a desk review of Illinois 60 by 25 Network collateral material including Leadership Community applications, Leadership Community reports on mini-grants, and a survey completed by diverse stakeholders in Leadership Communities in fall 2019.

BACKGROUND ON THE ILLINOIS 60 BY 25 NETWORK

Today, the majority of employers say they need employees with some post-secondary education. However, in 2020 only 52.2% of Illinois residents have a high-quality college degree or post-secondary credential.¹

To address this disconnect, in 2009 the Illinois P-20 Council established a goal for Illinois to increase the number of adults with high-quality college degrees and postsecondary credentials to 60% by the year 2025. While the P-20 Council and State agencies monitor this goal and focus on State policy to support it, State policy alone will not drive the local efforts needed to ensure students seamlessly progress to and through postsecondary education and into the workforce.

Recognizing the emergence of local initiatives across Illinois to increase postsecondary attainment and the lack of a statewide support infrastructure, the Illinois 60 by 25 Network was launched in 2013 by three Network Organizers: *Advance Illinois*, *Education Systems Center at Northern Illinois University (EdSystems)*, and the *Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC)*. The goal of the Network is to support communities to increase meaningful and equitable postsecondary attainment. Network Organizers support the Network by:

Hosting an Annual Convening

Providing Technical Assistance

Sharing Best Practices

Connecting Local Community Efforts to State Policy to advance the 60 by 25 Goal

Building Local Capacity to Develop and Scale Their Efforts Through:

- Providing funds to communities through mini-grants
- Providing a Cradle to Career Dashboard (dashboard.60by25.org) to help communities analyze regional data on education and workforce system characteristics

¹ Lumina Foundation - A Stronger Nation Report



Collective Impact

THE NETWORK'S GUIDING PRINCIPLE

Collective impact provides an approach for key actors from different sectors to work together on a common agenda to solve complex social problems. Network Organizers recognize that developing community-level approaches for college and career readiness and postsecondary degree and credential attainment require a deep commitment from partners across the spectrum of education, workforce development, community-based organizations, employers, and economic development agencies. Coordination of this kind requires investment of time and resources for sustainability, as well as technical assistance and networking support, so that communities can leverage resources in innovative ways.

Network Organizers are committed to partnering with communities using the process principles of collective impact, which include:

1

A common agenda of mutually reinforcing activities and shared qualitative and quantitative goals

2

Data-informed decision-making using shared measurement

3

Clear articulation of mutually reinforcing activities

4

Continuous communication among all stakeholders that make up the birth-to-career system

5

The development of backbone support — an organization that acts as an intermediary for the entire initiative and coordinates participating organizations and agencies

Network Organizers have also established a Guiding Team comprised of stakeholders from diverse sectors and communities. The Guiding Team informs the Network in terms of both the areas that it addresses and the types of work it should conduct.

Illinois 60 by 25 Network Leadership Communities

Since 2015, the Network Organizers have formally recognized communities with systems in place to drive meaningful and equitable postsecondary attainment as 60 by 25 Leadership Communities. To date, 16 communities have applied for and received this designation from the Network Organizers. Leadership Communities are required to do the following:



CURRENT LEADERSHIP COMMUNITIES

- *Aurora Regional Pathways to Prosperity*
- *East Side Aligned*
- *Enlace Chicago*
- *Evanston*
- *Health Professions Education Consortium (HPEC) of Lake County*
- *Making Opportunities Real for Everyone (MORE) in the Mississippi and Rock River Region*
- *McLean County*
- *NCI/Starved Rock Region*
- *Northwest Educational Council for Student Success (NECSS)*
- *OAI/Rich Township District 227*
- *Peoria Pathways to Prosperity*
- *Rockford*
- *Sangamon County Continuum of Learning*
- *Thrive Chicago*
- *Vandalia ONE*
- *Vermilion County*

ILLINOIS STUDENTS IN 60 BY 25 NETWORK LEADERSHIP COMMUNITIES

As of spring 2020, Leadership Communities represented school districts serving approximately 44% of public high school students in Illinois, totaling about 270,000 students. That representation extended to roughly one in three public high school students outside Chicago.



267,370

Public high school students in Leadership Communities statewide



44%

of public high school students statewide



162,727

Public high school students in Leadership Communities outside Chicago

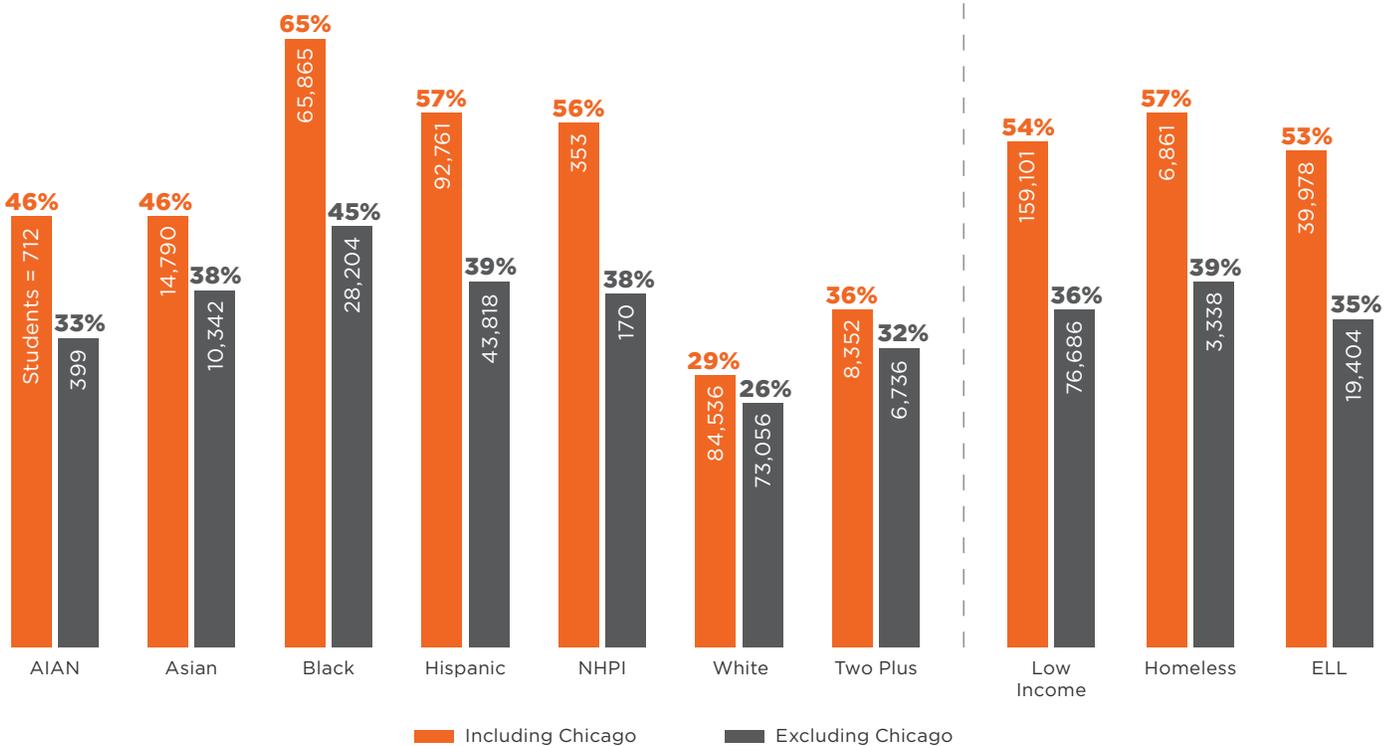


32%

of all high school students outside of Chicago

In sum, Leadership Communities serve substantial proportions of Illinois public high school students across demographic subgroups. These proportions, including and excluding Chicago, will inform the supports that Network Organizers offer current and future Communities.

Proportion of Public High School Students Statewide Served by the IL 60 by 25 Network



AIAN - American Indian and Alaska Native
 NHPI - Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander
 Two Plus - Two or more races/ethnicities
 ELL - English Language Learners

Notes: Calculations are rough estimates based upon application of district racial/ethnic enrollment rates to district enrollment in grades 9-12.

Source: ISBE Fall Enrollment Counts, 2019-20 Home District Enrollment Report



Impact Findings

LEADERSHIP COMMUNITIES DRIVE POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Leadership Communities serve as the tip of the spear to implement new State policies relating to college and career readiness and success, and their work helps inform State agencies about challenges related to policy implementation at a local level. In particular, a focus for the Network has been implementation of the Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness (PWR) Act (pwract.org). The PWR Act, enacted with bipartisan support in 2016, applies a student-centered, competency-based approach to support Illinois students in preparing for postsecondary education and future careers.

Network Organizers have provided more than \$500,000 in mini-grants to Leadership Communities to support the implementation of two strategies of the PWR Act: College and Career Pathway Endorsements (CCPE) on high school diplomas, and transitional math. This mini-grant model enables Network Organizers to seed local implementation efforts and thus build proof points for broader statewide scaling of policy. These relatively small investments have had a tremendous impact on the ability of many Leadership Communities to catalyze efforts that otherwise may not have been possible. One Leadership Community member went so far as to say that the mini-grant they received “was the spark that lit the fire” for a regional effort implementing college and career pathway endorsements in alignment with the PWR Act, which has the potential to impact hundreds of local students.

College and Career Pathway Endorsements

Endorsements demonstrate students' readiness for college and careers and completion of instruction and work-based learning experiences in a selected career interest area. Nearly 40 high schools in Leadership Communities are implementing College and Career Pathway Endorsements (CCPE) as part of a cohort of more than 100 high schools statewide. Implementation of endorsements in the Leadership Communities has informed the State's development of a web-based system to capture endorsement information for all districts and the inclusion of endorsements in the State's Every Student Succeeds Act Plan, Perkins IV Plan, and Model Partnership Agreement for dual credit. North Chicago School District 187 and Township High School District 214 are among the first districts to graduate students with the endorsement – across both districts, 14 high school graduates from the Class of 2020 will receive an endorsement on their high school transcripts. This cohort of students will grow substantially across all participating Leadership Communities in the coming years. In response to COVID-19, Network Organizers are supporting the Network to develop the work-based learning components of CCPE using remote and virtual approaches.

Transitional Math

Transitional Math courses in high school reduce math remediation needs by guaranteeing placement in credit-bearing courses in any Illinois community college and an increasing number of universities. Several Leadership Communities, including Aurora, Chicago, East St. Louis, MORE, NECSS, OAI, Peoria, Rockford, Springfield, and Vermilion, have been approved or are in the process of receiving approval for portability of these courses with their community colleges. In Township High School District 211, which is part of NECSS, multiple years of Transitional Math implementation have helped reduce math remediation levels from 25% to 17% over the past five years. In East St. Louis District 189, 52 high school students enrolled in Transitional Math classes in partnership with Southwestern Illinois College in the 2019-2020 school year, and the district intends to grow the cohort. These Leadership Communities have played an essential role in providing a foundation for statewide scaling, as the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) have now adopted a statewide implementation plan for all school districts to implement Transitional Math by no later than the 2021-2022 school year.

Postsecondary and Career Expectations Framework

The Postsecondary and Career Expectations (PaCE) Framework guides communities on how to organize career exploration and development, postsecondary preparation and selection, and financial literacy requirements. River Bend CUSD #2 in the MORE community has adapted the PaCE Framework starting in fifth grade and developed a list of benchmark expectations for staff, parents, and students as they plan and prepare for life after their postsecondary education. Although not funded through the Network, several other Leadership Communities implement the PaCE Framework and receive technical assistance from ISAC.

Competency-Based Education

In contrast to an education model focused on “seat time” (the amount of time a student spends in a class), a Competency-Based Education (CBE) model allows students more flexibility to progress as they demonstrate mastery of concepts. The PWR Act establishes a pilot program for voluntary school district participation in moving from seat time graduation requirements to competency-based high school graduation requirements. Seven Leadership Communities are among a cohort of 25 sites in 47 school districts that are implementing CBE through the PWR Act pilot.

In light of COVID-19 and associated disruptions to in-person learning, Network Organizers are working with the CBE pilot districts to learn about how their early implementation lessons can guide Network communities as they seek to build flexibility and resiliency into their systems.

USING A COLLECTIVE IMPACT APPROACH IS DEEPENING AND VALIDATING COLLABORATION

As described previously, collective impact provides a thoughtful framework for cross-stakeholder collaboration that is essential to driving systems change and impact. The frameworks and supports Leadership Communities receive as collective impact sites within the Network help these communities engage in deeper efforts that drive powerful impact locally.

In the Northwest Suburbs of Chicago, using collective impact re-affirmed the existing collaborative structure and strengthened their regional approach. In McLean County, using the approach allowed them to set a common agenda and organize previously fragmented efforts, which has helped them develop a short- and long-term strategic plan and begin developing a shared measurement system. For OAI in the South Suburbs of Chicago, collective impact prompted them to support coordinated action and strengthen relationships between employers and high schools.

THE NETWORK IS A VALUABLE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Since the Network’s inception, a core tenet has been to focus on opportunities for learning and sharing across communities. Network Organizers have provided an annual conference, targeted technical assistance, and connected communities directly to foster peer-to-peer learning. Eighty-seven percent of Leadership Community respondents to a survey in fall 2019 noted that these opportunities are tremendously valuable. For example, Peoria noted that visiting Township High School District 214 in the Northwest Suburbs of Chicago helped them understand how to sequence their career pathways, and they used that information to inform the Peoria Public Schools pathways curriculum. Several years later, they are now working to implement College and Career Pathway Endorsements. For East St. Louis, the conferences are an opportunity to strengthen existing relationships within their community.



The Illinois 60 by 25 Network Conferences are a time to drink the Kool-Aid together as a team. The conferences are inherently different than meeting in a conference room and also provide an opportunity to develop trust among partners.”

Sydney Stigge-Kaufmann,
East St. Louis
District 189

“IT TAKES A VILLAGE” — CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION SPURS INNOVATION

The collective impact model used by Network Leadership Communities has laid the groundwork for collaboration that takes local efforts beyond the classroom and traditional interventions to include a broader array of stakeholders and services in support of community success.

As such, communities have developed partnerships to offer complementary supports to students as they work towards the 60 by 25 goal. For example, East St. Louis District 189 and Vandalia ONE both highlighted the importance of offering social-emotional supports for students. District 189 has invested in social workers in the last two years, provided trauma-informed workshops to parents and other community members, and trained more than 500 teachers in trauma-informed practices. Vandalia ONE has established a resilience team that is working on social-emotional learning to help students and their families. NECSS has organized two conferences on the suburbanization of poverty over the past few years to inform educators and other stakeholders on the changing demographics and strategies to address the needs of students. Enlace Chicago in the Little Village neighborhood of Chicago has an initiative called Parent Leaders for College, which helps strengthen parents’ understanding of the college-going culture.



Having a structure that puts the right people in the room for the right decision is imperative. It’s also important to make sure that those people can make decisions.”

*Nancy Awdziejczyk,
NECSS*



Collaborating with representatives from different sectors helps us align systems and better advocate for social change.”

*Astrid Suarez,
Enlace Chicago*

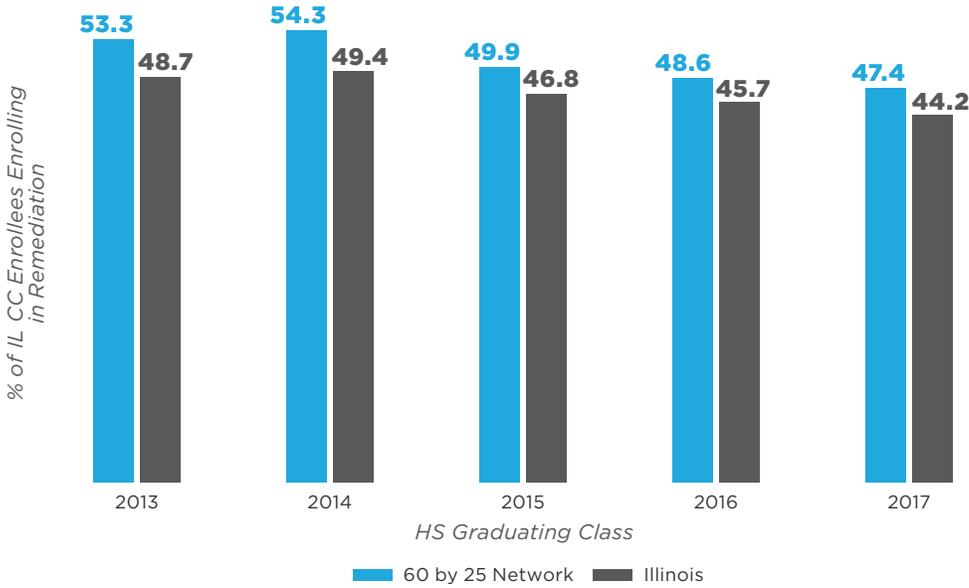
NETWORK LEADERSHIP & GOVERNANCE SUPPORTS SMOOTH LEADERSHIP TRANSITIONS

In collaborative efforts, cohesive and sustainable leadership and governance structures are essential to ensuring ongoing success. Network Organizers supported a number of communities including the Northwest Suburbs of Chicago, Rockford, and Peoria to undergo a Leadership and Governance Self-Assessment to deeply review and develop strategies to improve their leadership structures across secondary and postsecondary education, employers, and other key stakeholders. As a result, the Northwest Suburbs identified the importance of codifying and systematizing processes to ensure that they are not only relational and do not fall apart when leaders leave. The self-assessment also helped them develop a regional strategy for employer outreach on work-based learning, which included a coordinated approach for working with “super employers,” such as hospitals.

Celebrating Student Outcomes

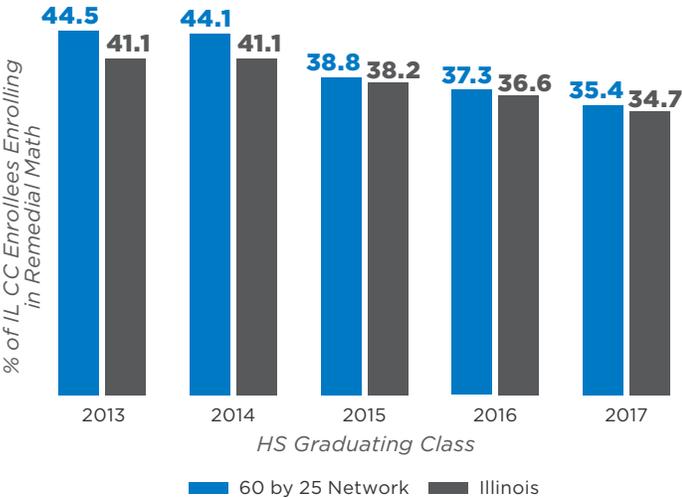
Many factors contribute to student success. Network Organizers believe that the strategies and approaches that Leadership Communities are implementing — such as cross-sector collaboration, developing strong leadership and governance systems, and participating in peer-to-peer learning — are vital contributors. Data are beginning to reflect this work and its impact across Leadership Communities.

Overall, community college *remedial enrollment fell 5.9 percentage points Network-wide* compared to 4.5 points statewide between the high school graduating classes of 2013 and 2017.



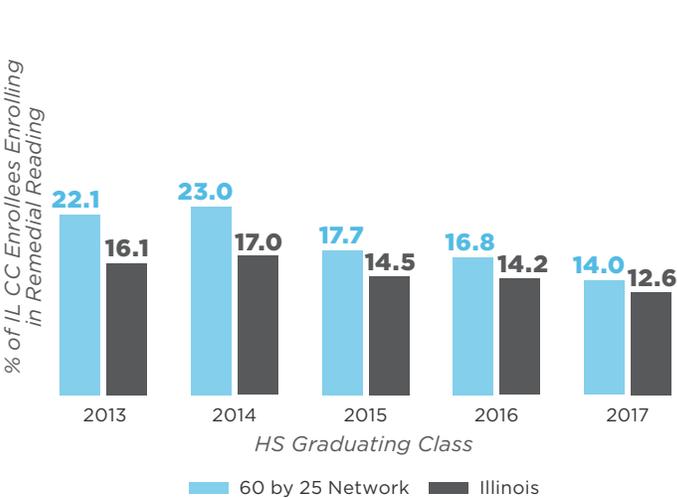
Sources: ISBE Postsecondary Remediation Report, 2015-2017; ISBE Illinois Report Card Public Data Set, 2018-2019

Enrollment in *Remedial Math fell 9.1 percentage points Network-wide* compared to 6.4 points statewide



Sources: ISBE Postsecondary Remediation Report, 2015-2017; ISBE Illinois Report Card Public Data Set, 2018-2019

Enrollment in *Remedial Reading fell 8.1 percentage points Network-wide* compared to 3.5 points statewide



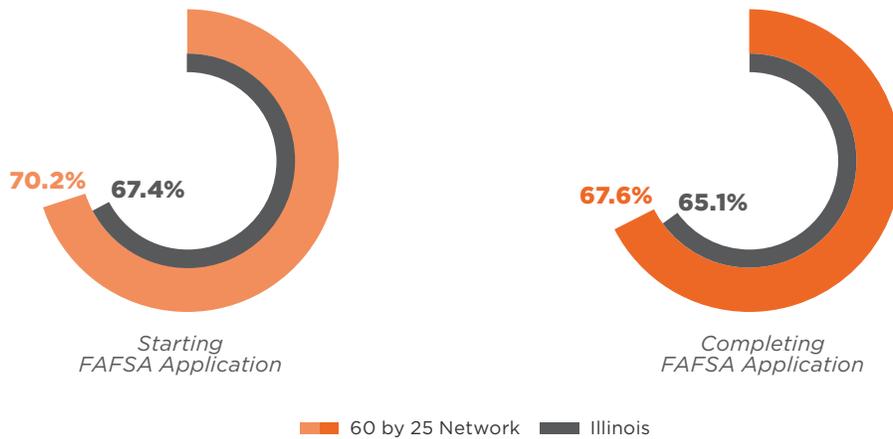
Sources: ISBE Postsecondary Remediation Report, 2015-2017; ISBE Illinois Report Card Public Data Set, 2018-2019

Of the 14 Leadership Communities joining the Illinois 60 by 25 Network prior to 2019, **nine Communities showed overall percentage point increases in community-wide 4-year high school graduation rates** since their initial year of membership



Source: ISBE Illinois Report Card Public Data Set, 2015-2019

Relative to the entire state, the **Network had higher rates of 2019 12th grade students starting a FAFSA application — 70.2% versus 67.4% — and completing an application — 67.6% versus 65.1%**



Note: ISAC uses prior year ACT test takers as its approximate denominator
Source: ISAC FAFSA Data File, 2018-2019 cycle

The Network Organizers are taking advantage of improvements in local and state data infrastructure that enable richer analysis of disaggregated and trend data. Organizers will continue to aim analyses, for the Network and in Leadership Communities, towards creating meaningful and actionable information for stakeholders.



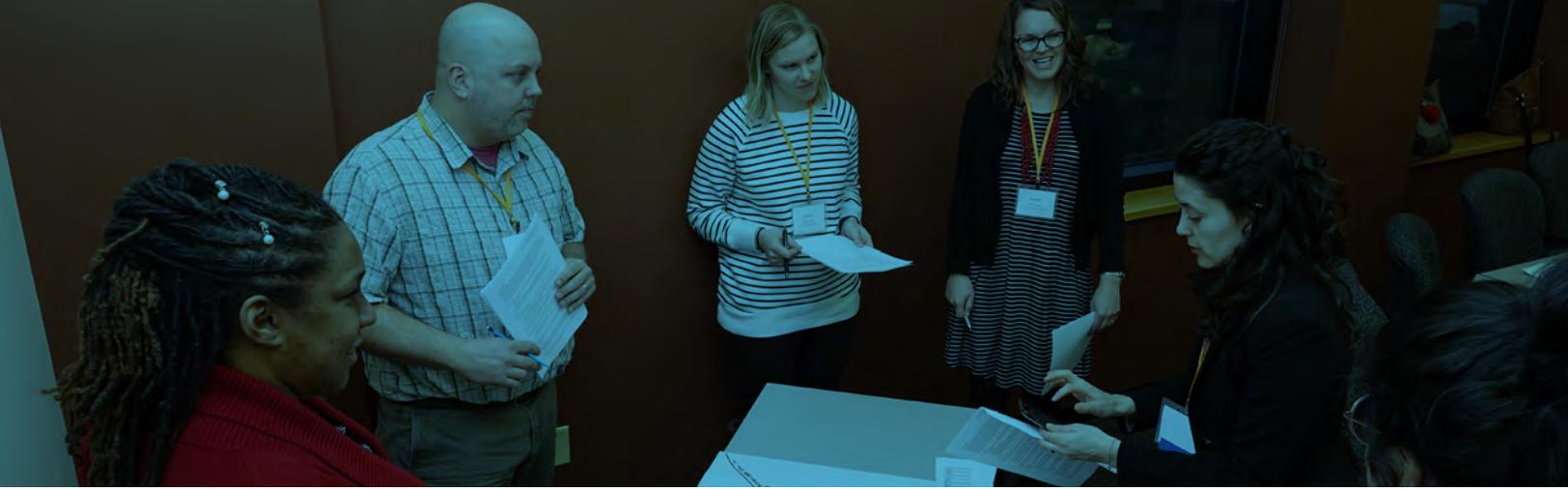
Key Challenges Identified by Communities

ENSURING EQUITY AND ACCESS

A key tenet of the Network is helping communities to ensure that all students, especially those from underserved and underrepresented populations, receive the supports they need to succeed in school and life. Network Organizers emphasize equity through Network mini-grant programs, disaggregated data in the Cradle to Career Dashboard, and by elevating it as a key theme at the annual conferences. While communities are all focused on access and equity, some have identified this as an ongoing challenge. For example, McLean County struggles with rural equity of opportunity. To address this, they are working with community organizations including the Center for Disability to provide technical assistance on inclusive practices. For NECSS, defining what equity means across the region is a work in progress, and their data committee is analyzing disaggregated data to identify and target student groups.

EVALUATION, TIME CONSTRAINTS, AND FUNDING

Communities identified defining shared outcomes and tracking progress as especially challenging. Many communities also struggle to commit time for collaboration, particularly without dedicated staff to manage these functions. Finally, identifying sustainable funding to support the collective impact work, especially in rural communities, is difficult.



Key Policy Barriers Identified by Communities

EDUCATOR SHORTAGE, LICENSURE, AND CREDENTIALING

Many communities across the State are facing challenges related to educator shortage, and, not surprisingly, Leadership Communities highlighted this as a concern as well. East St. Louis and McLean County identified the educator shortage as a significant barrier, while NECSS noted that teacher licensure for Career and Technical Education (CTE) creates challenges for their eligibility to teach in courses supported by CTE funding. Peoria noted that the teacher credentialing requirement for early college (e.g., dual credit) is a challenge, especially for rural schools.

STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

In instances where students participate in work-based learning experiences for school credit, the school must provide transportation, which is cost-prohibitive. Further, identifying viable alternatives often brings additional legal or financial barriers. For example, in Peoria, public transportation is not an option; in North Chicago, the school district uses taxis to transport students to and from their workplaces, which is not scalable. As Network Organizers collect and disseminate best practices for virtual implementation of work-based learning, they plan to identify opportunities for addressing these and similar challenges even when work-based learning returns to an in-person format.



Leadership Communities Have Valuable Advice for Their Peers



Have a strong, well-understood Memorandum of Understanding or joint resolution of all the stakeholders. Find a neutral backbone organization that can support the coordination of the work.”

Brent Baker,
Peoria



Develop partnerships with the local community college and universities and engage local businesses and government from the beginning.”

Jennifer Garrison,
Vandalia ONE



Start small and work your way up as you see success.”

Anisha Grimmett,
Alignment Rockford



Focus on outcomes from the beginning - logic modelling can be an effective way to do this.”

Dr. Lynne Haeffele,
McLean County



Bring people together who have the passion for the work. Be patient, persistent and prioritize.”

Dr. Darryl Hogue,
MORE

VOICES FROM THE ILLINOIS 60 BY 25 NETWORK GUIDING TEAM

As noted earlier in this report, Network Organizers have invited a diverse group of stakeholders to serve on the Guiding Team to help inform the Network in both the areas that the Network addresses and the type of work it conducts. The Network views the role of the Guiding Team as an extension of their organizational efforts and a way to connect their work to broader regional and State strategies. Conversations with Guiding Team members highlighted a number of ways in which they inform the Network and vice-versa.

CROSS-POLLINATION OF IDEAS

Serving on the Guiding Team connects members to professionals from sectors that they don't work closely with day-to-day and provides an opportunity for them to think about their work differently while informing the Network on how to address various challenges.

CONNECTING POLICY TO PRACTICE

Serving on the Guiding Team allows members to better connect State policy to the work on the ground.

DIVERSIFYING IDEAS AND APPROACHES

Guiding Team members provide different perspectives to the Network, which Network Organizers leverage to inform their work.



I understand how my work with a coalition of afterschool providers connects to career readiness, but I don't view myself as expert in this area. Being on the Guiding Team connects me to experts and creates better synergies with my work."

Susan Stanton,
Afterschool for Children and Teens Now (ACT Now) Coalition



It's helpful to have a window into how local communities and regions are thinking and working innovatively to make postsecondary attainment available to all students. It helps me think about how State agencies like IBHE can best support those efforts."

Stephanie Bernoteit,
Illinois Board of Higher Education



I bring the voice and experiences of a smaller, semi-rural community to inform strategies and supports and ensure that these communities are considered in the Network's collective impact efforts."

Dr. Travis McGuire,
Superintendent of Hinckley-Big Rock CUSD #429



I have established relationships with a different set of stakeholders, and hearing what is happening in communities helps me connect the dots and informs my work."

Mara Botman,
Circle of Service Foundation

Implications for the Network Moving Forward

Based on the Leadership Community survey results, the findings of this report, and current realities related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the uprisings caused by racial injustice, Network Organizers will offer additional supports for communities in 2020 and 2021, including the following:



Continue to listen to community stakeholders to understand the impact of COVID-19 on communities.



Continue to learn about, lift up, and support communities in implementing equitable policies and practices.



Continue to organize virtual, and when possible, in-person meetings to provide peer-to-peer learning opportunities for communities.



Identify strategies to engage communities in the Illinois P-20 Council's efforts to reach equity-focused targets aimed at closing institutional racial and socioeconomic achievement gaps.



Build the data capacity of Leadership Communities, both through the Illinois 60 by 25 Cradle to Career Dashboard and local data workshops.



Seek funding and identify policy changes needed to address the educator shortage.



Seek funding to support the capacity of backbone organizations, particularly in rural communities.



Continue to encourage State agencies and funders to utilize the Network as a key partner in State policy implementation.

As the Illinois 60 by 25 Network continues into its eighth year, Network Organizers are excited to continue to work with existing and emerging Leadership Communities and engage with other Network members and stakeholders to help Illinois progress towards its 60 by 25 goal. The Network continues to provide a structure to connect State policies with efforts at the local level and to support communities in increasing meaningful and equitable postsecondary opportunities for their residents.

ACRONYM GLOSSARY

| | |
|------------|---|
| CCPE | College and Career Pathway Endorsements |
| CBE | Competency-Based Education |
| IBHE | Illinois Board of Higher Education |
| ICCB | Illinois Community College Board |
| ISBE | Illinois State Board of Education |
| ISAC | Illinois Student Assistance Commission |
| MORE | Making Opportunities Real for Everyone in the Mississippi and Rock River Region |
| NECSS | Northwest Educational Council for Student Success |
| PaCE | Postsecondary and Career Expectations |
| Perkins IV | The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 |
| PWR | The Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Act |



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Network Organizers would like to thank all of the public and private funders who have supported the Network over the years. This report would not be possible without their support. In addition, the successes and best practices highlighted in this report would not be possible without the active participation from each of the Illinois 60 by 25 Network Leadership Communities, Guiding Team members, and other stakeholders across Illinois.



About Advance Illinois

Advance Illinois is a nonpartisan, nonprofit founded to be an objective voice for a public education system that prepares all students for college, career and democratic citizenship.

www.advanceillinois.org



About Education Systems Center (EdSystems)

Education Systems Center is a policy development and program implementation center that shapes and strengthens education and workforce systems that prepare more young people for productive careers in a global economy.

www.edsystemsniu.org



About the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC)

ISAC is the state's college access and financial aid agency with the mission of making college accessible and affordable for Illinois students.

www.isac.org

PRIMARY AUTHOR

Edith Njuguna,
Director of the Illinois 60 by 25 Network

www.60by25.org